

USDA NRCS NEWS

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NRCS Seeks Comments on Environmental Quality Incentive Program

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is seeking comments from Tennessee landowners, agricultural organizations, environmental and commodity organizations, and agencies on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The purpose of these sessions is to receive public comment on the four national priorities on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and to determine if there are other resource concerns that are not addressed by the current national priorities. Nine listening sessions are scheduled across the state.

NRCS periodically reviews and updates the EQIP priorities to ensure the program continues to address the most significant resource needs and emerging resource issues. "Updating the national priorities will help us to prepare for the 2006 program year and for the next Farm Bill reauthorization in 2007," states James Ford, NRCS State Conservationist.

The four national priorities are:

- Water quality - Reduction of non-point source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity in impaired watersheds consistent with Total Daily Maximum Loads (TMDL's) where available, as well as the reduction of groundwater contamination and the conservation of ground and surface water resources.
- Air quality - Reduction of emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- Soil erosion - Reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable high levels on agricultural land.
- Wildlife habitat Promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation.

The following questions may be used to guide comments on the EQIP national priority portion of the session:

1. What emerging natural resource issues are not addressed by the current national EQIP priorities? Identify the nature of the concern and its extent or significance within Tennessee.
2. What modifications, if any, are needed to the four existing National priorities? Do these existing priorities continue to reflect the critical national resource needs and concerns?

Contact: For more information in Tennessee, contact AnnSue Wattenbarger at 615-277-2570. Comments can be faxed to 615-277-2577 or sent by US mail to Annsue Wattenbarger, 675 US Courthouse, 801 Broadway, Nashville, TN 37203. Comments can also be made on the web at: www.tn.nrcs.usda.gov